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HANDEL'S CLOCK MUSIC

By WILLIAM BARCLAY SQUIRE

EARLY in the reign of George I a clockmaker named Charles Clay, who came from Stockton, in Yorkshire, petitioned Parliament for a patent in respect of a musical and repeating watch or clock. A similar watch was produced about the same time by Daniel Quare, who was supported by the Company of Clock-makers and opposed Clay's application. The matter was fought out in prolonged litigation which lasted from February 1716 until the latter part of 1717, ending in a refusal of Clay's petition for a patent. For some years after this nothing is heard of Clay, who seems to have settled in London, living in the Strand. But in the *Weekly Advertiser* for 8 May, 1736, there appeared the following paragraph:

On Monday Mr. Clay, the inventor of the machine watches in the Strand, had the honour of exhibiting to Her Majesty at Kensington his surprising musical clock, which gave uncommon satisfaction to all the Royal Family present, at which time Her Majesty, to encourage so great an Artist, was pleased to order fifty guineas to be expended for numbers in the intended raffle, by which we hear Mr. Clay intends to dispose of this said beautiful and most complete piece of Machinery.

Who won the clock at the raffle and what became of it for the next hundred and odd years are unknown, but the late Mr. F. J. Britten, in his "Old Clocks and Watches and their Makers" (3rd edition, 1911, p. 359) gives a full description of it, accompanied by an illustration. According to this, it had been for many years in a manor-house in Suffolk. It stood 8 feet 6 inches high, the case being in two parts, the upper of Amboyna wood with brass mounts and the pedestal (of Spanish Mahogany and Amboyna wood) containing Clay's chiming apparatus. Mr. Britten states that the chiming machine had 21 bells, driven by a weight "though the barrel is fully 12 inches in diameter." Dampers prevented the vibration of the bells one with another and the music started directly the clock had finished striking. In the arch of the dial were shown the age of the moon, the day of the month and a list of the tunes played by the clock, viz.: "Mr. Arcangelo Corelli's Twelfth Concerto, 1st, Adagio; 2nd, Allegro; 3rd, Saraband; 4th, Jigg. The Fugue in the overture of Ariadne." Mr. Britten does not say where the clock was when he wrote, nor

who was its owner, but he was largely assisted in his work by Mr. Percy Webster, whose knowledge of old English clocks is very extensive, and that gentleman, in reply to my enquiries, kindly informs me that, to the best of his recollection, the clock was owned by the late Mr. F. A. English, of Addington Park, Surrey. Mr. Webster's description differs considerably from that given in Mr. Britten's book. He says that:

There was no listed tunes, but the musical part in the base of the clock was very elaborate, with a large pricked barrel, and (from memory) quite three octaves, with extra bells for half-notes . . . and originally a system of dampers. Another machine was contained in the upper part, playing on organ pipes: this fell into dilapidation and was removed.

The differences between Mr. Britten's and Mr. Webster's descriptions make it very desirable that the clock should be examined again. Unfortunately, Mr. English is dead, and so far I have been unable to trace the whereabouts of Clay's "surprising musical clock." That the machine created considerable interest in London at the time of its exhibition is proved by the fact that no less a person than Handel wrote and arranged at least one set of tunes for it. This fact is not mentioned in Chrysander's life of the composer, nor are the tunes to be found in the incomplete edition of his works issued by the Händel-Gesellschaft. Their existence only came to light on the disposal, in the spring of last year, of Lord Aylesford's collection of musical manuscripts. This collection was bequeathed to an ancestor of the present Earl's by Handel's friend Jennens. It consisted (*inter alia*) of a very large number of copies of Handel's music, mostly in the writing of John Christopher Smith. The copies seem to have been made in the most indiscriminate fashion and Smith filled his volumes with the first thing that came to hand, with the result that their contents are often very confusing and difficult to identify. At the sale the larger part of the collection passed into the hands of dealers, but I was fortunate enough to secure a number of miscellaneous volumes containing a quantity of unpublished compositions which seem never to have been seen by Chrysander. In two of these volumes there are two sets of tunes for a musical clock. The first set is entitled "Ten [there are really eleven] Tunes for Clay's Musical Clock." The second set begins with a "Sonata for a Musical Clock"—followed by five other pieces evidently also written for the same purpose. No. 2 of the first Set also occurs as No. 3 of the Second Set, where it has the curious title "A Voluntary on A Flight of Angels," which clearly connects the two sets with Clay's

clock. Whether they were ever actually used by Clay it is impossible to say. So far the only musical clock by him which is known is that described by Mr. Britten, and this apparently only played a selection from a Concerto by Corelli and an excerpt from the overture to Handel's "Ariadne." But the existence of these Handelian tunes shows that Handel must have seen and been interested in Clay's invention, and it is characteristic of his untiring energy that he should have taken the trouble to arrange these tunes for a mechanical clock, carefully altering the opera airs so as to avoid the inevitable *Da Capo's* of the originals. The question as to the compass of the tunes is rather difficult to decide without knowing for certain how many notes were played by Clay's machine. Mr. Britten says that the clock contained only 21 bells; Mr. Webster that the compass was three octaves. If the former is correct, the tunes in Set I could not have been played as they are written. But it is probable (as shown by comparing the two versions of the "Voluntary or Flight of Angels") that the lower part in Set I was written on the bass stave only for convenience and that it would be played in the clock an octave higher, which would bring it within the compass described by Mr. Britten. The two sets are here printed. Musically they are not of much value, but they are interesting as showing that, like Mozart in later days, mechanical reproduction of music was not beneath Handel's notice. One cannot but wonder what Handel and Mozart would have written for the Pianola!

Handel's Clock Music.

Set I

No. 1.

Sheet music for Handel's Clock Music, featuring six staves of musical notation for two voices (Soprano and Bass) and piano.

The music consists of six staves of musical notation:

- Staff 1 (Top):** Soprano part, treble clef, common time. Features continuous eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 2 (Second from Top):** Bass part, bass clef, common time. Features continuous eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 3 (Third from Top):** Soprano part, treble clef, common time. Features continuous eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 4 (Fourth from Top):** Bass part, bass clef, common time. Features continuous eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 5 (Fifth from Top):** Soprano part, treble clef, common time. Features continuous eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 6 (Bottom):** Bass part, bass clef, common time. Features continuous eighth-note patterns.

No. 2.

Sheet music for Handel's Clock Music, featuring six staves of musical notation for two voices (Soprano and Bass) and piano.

The music consists of six staves of musical notation:

- Staff 1 (Top):** Soprano part, treble clef, common time. Features eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 2 (Second from Top):** Bass part, bass clef, common time. Features eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 3 (Third from Top):** Soprano part, treble clef, common time. Features eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 4 (Fourth from Top):** Bass part, bass clef, common time. Features eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 5 (Fifth from Top):** Soprano part, treble clef, common time. Features eighth-note patterns.
- Staff 6 (Bottom):** Bass part, bass clef, common time. Features eighth-note patterns.



No. 3.

A musical score for piano, labeled "No. 3." It consists of six staves of music. The first three staves begin in common time (indicated by a "C") and transition to 2/4 time (indicated by a "2/4" over the staff). The subsequent three staves also begin in common time and transition to 2/4 time. The music features a continuous melodic line in the treble clef staff, with harmonic support provided by the bass clef staff. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

*"Vola l'augello" (Sosarme)*

No. 4.

No. 5.

Allegro

"Alla fama dimmi il vero" (Ottone)

No. 6.

A musical score consisting of two staves of music for a single instrument. The music is in common time and starts with a treble clef. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings like 'tr' (trill). The music is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.



Deh lascia un bel desio (Arianna)

No. 7.

A musical score consisting of four staves of music. The top two staves are for the upper voice, and the bottom two staves are for the lower voice. The piano accompaniment is provided by the left hand of the pianist, indicated by the single staff on the far left.



No. 8.





"Dell' onda ai fieri moti" (Ottone)

No. 9.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

"In mille dolci modi" (Sosarme)

No. 10.



No. 11.





Handel's Clock Music

Set II

Sonata

No. 1.

A page of musical notation for two staves, continuing from the previous page. The top staff uses a treble clef and the bottom staff uses a bass clef. The music consists of six measures, each ending with a repeat sign and a double bar line, indicating a repeat of the section. The notation includes various note values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Measure 7 starts with a sixteenth-note pattern. Measures 8 and 9 continue this pattern with some variations. Measure 10 begins with a sixteenth-note pattern. Measures 11 and 12 continue the pattern, with measure 12 concluding with a half note.

No. 2.



A Voluntary on a Flight of Angels

No. 3.





No. 4.



No. 5.





Menuet

No. 6.

A musical score for Menuet No. 6, consisting of five staves of music. The staves are in common time (indicated by a 'C') and G major (indicated by a 'G'). The music features various note heads, stems, and rests.

Air

No. 7.

A musical score for Air No. 7, consisting of five staves of music. The staves are in common time (indicated by a 'C') and G major (indicated by a 'G'). The music features various note heads, stems, and rests.